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*THE STAMPEDE*  
By Edward J. Holslag

—Mural from the First National Bank of Pueblo

## An American Artist of Merit

By F. W. WARFORD

He lives and labors 'midst his favored things,  
Walks with the poor, and talks, and oft doth fill  
Long, weary days with toil, till twilight brings  
That consolation only found thru skill.

THE above lines are assuredly appropriate to the subject of this article, Edward J. Holslag, a true artist and an exceptional mural painter. One may now ask, "What makes him a true artist?" Well, to view his work is a reply within itself, but to give an exact answer in words is an exceedingly difficult thing.

Ethically, a true artist is one who holds the mirror up to Nature, one who has no praise for virtue or no tears for vice, but one who portrays life and things exactly as he sees them. He may be a saint and portray horrible things, he may be a scoundrel and paint all that is divine. He is one who observes with an unerring eye, who imagines the immaterial with a perfection of intellect and who then exposes by skill of hand all that God, talent and practice has given him.

The philosopher, Fray Louis De Lenon, a

Mystic Friar of Spain and a friend of Saint John of the Cross, was once taken from his class room by an invading army which imprisoned him for four years in a far distant country. Upon his release he returned to his native class room and, requesting his awaiting students to open their text books at a certain page, he addressed them as follows: "As I was saying when I left. . . ." He then continued from the exact place where his last lesson had been interrupted, as if it had occurred but a day or so before.

It is such a mind that the true artist must possess. It must retain all that it has experienced, even to the minutest thing, it must be ever fresh in detail, and it must always be a part of that which it depicts.

All these things are the true artist's needs, yet, there are more, for he who creates must possess the sense of privacy, the power to iso-



*A WAGON TRAIN GOING THROUGH OLD PUEBLO*  
By Edward J. Holslag

—Mural from the First National Bank of Pueblo

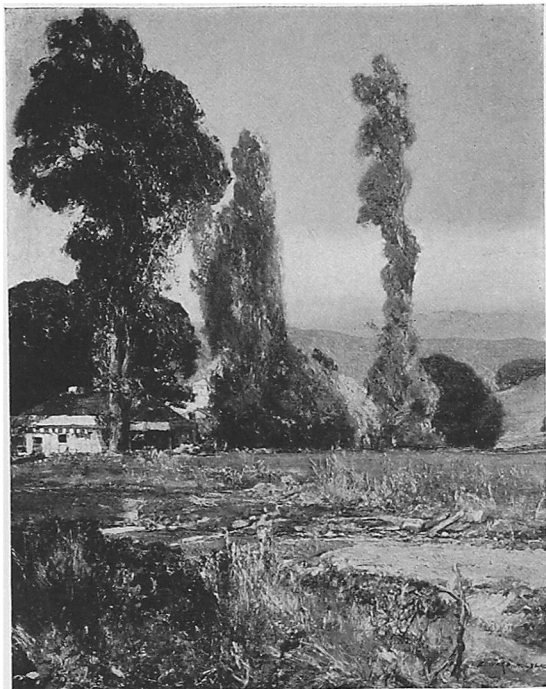
late his own genius from everything else in the world, and to be absolutely concentrative. To create what is grand in art one must be alone, have strange unuttered thoughts, just as in the realms of the soul every human being must have moments of complete isolation for

the thoughts, reveries and moods that come during such periods. These cannot be shared even with those whom we love best for in truth, the artistic being comes and departs absolutely alone. Friendship, love and all that the average mortal instinctively seeks, the art-



*THE PACK TRAIN ON SANTA FE TRAIL*  
By Edward J. Holslag

—Mural from the First National Bank of Pueblo



LANDSCAPE—CALIFORNIA  
By Edward J. Holslag

ist must shun. What others shrink from he must seek, although it avail nothing and bring on that awful solitude of the soul.

To encompass all that is said above is to be capable of producing truly artistic work and since that is scarce indeed, I shall find it a pleasure to discuss that of Edward J. Holslag.

This artist excels in painting enchanting nudes with marine settings, or, peaceful landscapes dozing in the warm light of summer suns. If he does anything better than this, it is the life, and fire, and reality that he puts into murals depicting some romantic scene of an historical nature. Recently, in California I was attracted to an exceedingly beautiful picture of his called, "The Sirens." It portrayed a stretch of rock-strewn shore near a beautiful tropical sea where several nude sirens basked and bathed in idealic splendor. Some were in its blue waters near the silvery sands, and the reflective play of ripples showed the glistening moisture on their exposed bodies. The foremost figure sat on a rock facing the sunlit sea, and the skill of the artist showed a dull glow from her auburn

hair and created a feeling of the fine texture, the exquisite softness, and the entrancing warmth of her beautiful roseate skin.

If Mr. Holslag has a first love in art subjects it is landscapes, which he does remarkably well. I saw eleven of these which were recently purchased by an eminent art patron for his own private collection, and a critical eye would marvel at the wonderful technique and virility of each.

Give him a quiet cot, a rocky, rugged coast or a few distant hills, and his pictures will tell a story.

"California," an accompanying illustration, is a splendid example of this. Who needs to be told that it is one of those semi-arid valleys of the South? The giant eucalyptus stands out against the distant, blue-backed mountains and in the soft breeze the younger trees lean toward the weather-beaten monarch and expose the white wounds of their scaled bark as if beseeching sympathy from their rugged ancestor. The half-dry stream, the lowly cot and the calm sky speak of time and contentment even more clearly than words.



EDWARD J. HOLSLAG



THE FIRST U. S. MAIL OUT OF EL PASO  
By Edward J. Holslag

—Mural from the First National Bank of El Paso

Having contemplated important decorations of many public buildings, the artist spent much time abroad in making a detailed study of over seven hundred of the finest interiors of France, Spain, Italy and other European countries and it is as a painter of murals that he is perhaps best known.

Representative work from his brush is to be found in practically every part of our country. There is scarcely a state from the Atlantic to the Pacific or from the Gulf to the Canadian Line that does not possess one or more buildings handsomely decorated, thus testifying to Mr. Holslag's wonderful taste and skill as a splendid mural artist.

Upon the completion of the Congressional Library at Washington, D. C., America's most representative work of art, he was commissioned to supervise the entire decorative scheme of the interior. Through his unusual ability he not only executed some of the beautiful paintings of this famous building, but the laying out of the color scheme and the execution of the entire work came under his personal judgment.

Some of his more recent work of this nature may be found in the decoration of the Hotel Davenport of Spokane, Washington, the Fontanelle Hotel of Omaha, Nebraska, and in many of the finer banks of the West and Southwest.

The Davenport is one of the most unique hotels in this country. Its style is of the Spanish Renaissance and its entire interior is composed of fac simile reproductions of the finest old Castilian interiors. Its marked feature is a beautiful lobby in an enclosed Patio effect. This measures sixty by one hundred feet, with an elaborately carved flowing fountain in the center.

The Fontanelle, a hotel of two hundred and fifty rooms, is designed from the French Renaissance period by Thomas R. Kimball, F. A. I. A., an architect of note, of Omaha, Nebraska. Collaborating with Mr. Holslag, Mr. Kimball has completed one of the most artistic and beautiful hotels of our country.

No finer historical murals can be found than those of Mr. Holslag's in the banks of the West. They depict actual scenes of the early history of that romantic country with all the vividness and realism of the actual occurrences.

For natural complacence, "A Wagon Train Going Through Old Pueblo," is a good example. It is one of an excellent group on the walls of the First National Bank of Pueblo, Colorado. There is an air of progress in all its subjects, yet a sense of complete satisfaction prevails throughout the entire picture. In the lower left-hand corner we see a squaw with a pappoose strapped to her back, parley-

ing for the sale of some object with a vigorous young cow-puncher on a bald-faced pony. Next to him is an old guide in buckskins, riding forward as if suggesting a start. The tired oxen and Mexican drivers are lounging during their brief rest and in the background we see the prairie schooners, the main street, and the distant snow-capped mountains.

For contrast let us now look at "The Stampede," a wonderful picture of the same group. A sudden fright has seized upon a great herd of cattle. They rush forward under the influence of appalling terror until they become a solid mass of plunging, struggling madness. The white alkali dust rises beneath their slashing feet, the foam flies from their burning mouths and nostrils and they stare out of the picture with bloody eyeballs protruded with consternation. One huge white brute lunges over its companion as if to escape the unseen terror and their slashing horns and rigid tails whip the bellowed air in their fatal frenzy. The cowmen know of the terrible consequences and with hissing quirks they hurl their wild-eyed mustangs against the raging sea of horns, hoofs and bodies in one terrible effort to turn the leaders of the mad stampede.

Another splendid mural is "The First United States Mail Out of El Paso." This is one of a series of four pictures illustrating the early history of El Paso, Texas. They decorate the walls of the First National Bank of that city, which is the outgrowth of its first financial institution, namely, "The Bank of El Paso." Such a picture needs no encomium, yet originals contain so much more than the best illustrations that an adequate portrayal in words should be made.

Plunging up the centre of the outpost's single street and lunging into the foreground is the triple-hitch of the Overland Mail. The accuracy of animal action and expression in this picture is faultless. The clinched bits, the taut traces, the eagerness and the forward spring of the first span of mules shows all the life and all that action that *should* be shown and possessed by a lead-team. In conformity to this, the middle span have less fire, although they are well up in the harness, and the wheel-team, true to reality, are stumbling and awk-

ward in the quick start, for it is they that guide the lumbering, strap-hung coach along the perilous trail and they must be slower to be steady. This composition is admirable. Notice the tensioned traces on the lead-team, the slightly slackened traces on the second and then the wheel-team crowded between the on-rushing coach and the endeavoring middle span. The lone cottonwood with its placard, probably offering a reward for some outlaw; the adobe shacks with their water spouts extending over the sidewalks, the stoic drivers, the loafing "greasers" and the distant mountains of old Mexico, all tell in their forceful way the story of early days along the dim Rio Grande.

In one of his pictures of a Government survey train a long line of prairie-schooners are at a standstill, while its chief and an old scout are conversing at its head.

The chief is astride of a haltered horse, whose head proves him to be a well bred Morgan. This animal rests in a perfectly natural position. The old scout straddles a typical calico pony of the plains, whose forelegs and shoulders seem to be slightly contracted. Upon my mentioning this, the artist's eyes brightened and he replied, "Ah, good! You are one in a thousand who knows horse-flesh, the pony is 'foundered.'" What words could tell a story more plainly than such a picture? The surveyor's part of the picture is a story of civilization. His horse is well-bred, halter-broke, purchased and cared for. The scout's part of the picture is a story of the frontier. His horse is a pin-eared broncho, it knew nothing but a Comanche bridle, its price was the arm swing of a lariat and it had been ridden until "foundered" for there were plenty more for the same price.

It is all this wealth of natural detail and accuracy that makes his paintings tell their story. There is no puzzling mysticism that leaves disturbed thoughts in the minds of observers, for he makes his pictures speak through a medium which he handles with a skill and in a manner most sympathetic to his personal expression.

I watched him on an easel picture. It showed an open place between the twisting

trunks of ghastly trees on the first low hills off of a desert's edge. A few sprigs of grease-wood and cactus struggled for life in the opening, and in its centre was a small, glassy pool. Along the naked limbs of the half-starved trees, across the pallid stillness of the sands and into this sinister pool the night moon cast an uncanny greenish glow.

"It suggests Death," I ventured.

"Yes," he replied, "when it is finished there will be a lone body of an outstretched Mexican clawing for the water that he shall never reach."

Thus the paintings of this artist are contemporary, they are modern, but not faddish. They are of today, and yesterday, yet they are neither prophetic nor inventive of some unusual and generally unacceptable tomorrow.

The sincerity of his work is so evident and

its quality so fine that it cannot fail to appeal to many. It has no painful assertiveness, but one feels its force and directness. His drawing is commendable, his color is excellent, he has unity of tone and in composition he excels.

He does not seek publicity, nor does he coerce it by refusing to be interviewed. To the contrary he likes people, and conversation means much to him. His mind is essentially receptive, yet he does not pose as a monopolist of ideas. It is these things that perhaps account for a large circle of friends and a deserved recognition as a creator of many beautiful paintings.

Such are the qualities of Edward J. Holslag, an eminent American artist, who not only paints what he sees, but also that which others feel—these, the two cardinal requisites of true artistic genius.



BERKELEY HILLS  
By Edward J. Holslag